THE RUSSIAN ADVANCE IN ASIA.

The sentiment of Americans toward Russia has been for many years that between distant friends, the strength of whose friendship lies in the absence of conflicting interests. On the other hand, the displeasure which has sometimes led us to lift up our eyes to heaven and deplore the political immorality of Great Britain is occasioned chiefly by that familiarity which, in great things, as in small, breeds contempt. It has been the fashion in this country to condemn the avid appetite for land developed by England, while condoning the equally prodigious enlargement of the Russian Empire. The popular idea of each is, unhappily for us, prompted by an ignorance of the real issue involved, serene enough to allow most Americans a birthright in the land where the adage tells us it were folly to be wise. As a people we have been indifferent to Russian aggressions because they seemed to concern only the states of Eastern Europe and the more benighted parts of Western and Middle Asia. The acquisitions of Great Britain having been made in more conspicuous regions appear to have excited irritation wherever they are known. The eternal principles which govern the course and conduct of nations, their preservation, and the benefit alike of ruler and ruled, are obscured because of petty prejudices or the equally petty ambitions of politicians. A sense of nearness has, however, recently come upon us while contemplating Russia's latest move in Eastern Asia. By passing from Siberia to China she has become in an appreciable fashion our neighbor, with all that this implies to our trans-Pacific trade.

Early in the present century, when Russia began her glacier-like movement from West to East across the Asiatic continent, always mindful of consolidating as well as conquering her territories, the commercial enterprise of Great Britain found its way to Eastern Asia by sea; and because the door of trade would not open the eager merchants blew it in. The Imperial clan that have governed China since the days of Cromwell were aroused from their fancied security by two wars, and forced to recede a little from their besotted policy of obstruction and isolation. But the lesson of these encounters was not fully learned either by the teacher or by the taught. England hoped, for no sufficient reason, that when her military impotence had been clearly proven China would listen to the voice of persuasion; and since trade, not territory or booty, was

her object, it seemed incredible to the Anglo-Saxon that a nation of astute traffickers like the Chinese should not understand their best interests and reconstruct their affairs upon European models. They did not perceive that it was the Manchu Dynasty and the ruling class of bigoted and self-centered *literati,* not the Chinese people, with whom they had to deal. The Court of Peking, on the other hand, when it saw the operations of the victor stayed and his troops withdrawn, sought safety in diplomacy and endeavored to frustrate by finesse the desires of the foreigners, which it had been quite unable to prevent by force. So the work of Great Britain remained incomplete, while China relapsed once more into her fantastic confidence in a military and intellectual strength that had vanished more than a century before.

Meanwhile Russia was continuing her attack, already well begun when the Opium War occurred, by absorbing in succession the various nomadic tribes and independent Khanates that lay upon the western borders of the Chinese Empire. Her aims were utterly unlike those of England. She wanted not trade, but empire. For Russia is poor and backward, China is rich; and, man for man, the Chinese peasant is better material for the farm, the factory, the army, than the Russian *Moujik.* Like the Goth of medieval Europe, the Slav of to-day watches from his northern fastness the rich plains and prospect of plunder in the south. In comparison to his ambitions the desires of all other European nations are as fly-bites to the Chinese Empire. The Russian, better informed than his rivals as to the wealth and potential strength to be secured from the mastership of China, eagerly anticipates his opportunity not only to coerce and conquer, but to use and preserve.

In order to comprehend the meaning of Russia's attitude as she stands over China now, it is necessary to review some typical incidents in her past career and endeavor to secure from these an outline of her deliberate policy. Her aspiration toward territorial expansion was, for the first time perhaps, clearly expressed in the reign of Peter the Great, but it was not given definite direction until the period of Catherine II, when by following along the line of least resistence, it found in Asia an adequate field for its fulfilment. The problem of advancing her ambition was at that time complicated by the Near Eastern Question, involving the dislodgment of Turkey from territory that was legitimately Muscovite, lying about the Black Sea. This question has had a mighty influence upon the affairs of Europe during the century which has elapsed since Catherine's death, but it may be dismissed here as outside the province of our immediate inquiry, except, perhaps, for its indirect use-

fulness to her ulterior purposes, as a blind to set before the civilized world while she fashioned her forces for other ends. These ends she could achieve in her own way and in her own convenient time. The whole unoccupied northern slope of the continent was her property by right of conquest effected in the seventeenth century, affording at once a commanding base for operations against any part of Middle and Eastern Asia, and a field for colonization. Russia appears to be so vast a country even to her own statesmen, however, that the uses of Siberia as a home for her surplus population have been until lately overlooked; but its admirable fitness for the furtherance and support of her expansion schemes was never neglected or forgotten. Nature herself had secured this long line upon its northern side, so that with his back toward an impenetrable frozen coast the great bear could menace in safety the inhabitants of half a continent.

The frozen swamps and tundras of the Asiatic seaboard did not, however, satisfy her very natural desires. It was necessary in advancing these to impinge upon the territories lying south of her possessions, and thus carry the world-old conflict of East and West, of Turanian and Aryan, at once to the remotest extremity of Asia. The attempt, when first made, met with a decided rebuff, for during the last century the Manchu rulers of China were capable of giving the law to all further Asia, and when Russian adventurers tried to occupy the fertile valley of the Amur, the Emperor at Peking commanded their withdrawal and the Emperor at St. Petersburg obeyed. Such arrogance as was shown by the eastern to the western court during the intercourse of a hundred years would have stung any sensitive nation to war. But Russia at this stage was comforted, doubtless, by two reflections: first, nobody then knew or cared about what happened in Northern Asia; second, she was young and could afford to bide her time while China was old and sure to fail.

Meantime a task of more pressing importance awaited her nearer home. The safety of Western Siberia, already proving its agricultural richness, was gravely affected by nomadic bands which preyed upon its southern border. To expose her flank at any place in her long line was fatal to Russia's ultimate hopes of securing Eastern Asia. It was therefore necessary to attack the Kirghizes, the Usbegs, the Turkomans, and finally the little Khanates of the whole trans-Caspian region occupying what is distinctively called Central Asia. Russia must not only be forgiven, but praised for this work. It was a fierce and thankless contest against savagery and the intense and fanatical bigotry of Muhammadan communities that

fought with the consecrated fury of the earlier Saracen conquerors It incidentally placed the victor in a position where—by means of a railroad which has finally solved the problem of controlling desert tribes—he could threaten the Indian, Persian and Turkish empires; but his real desires, the security of Western Siberia and the trade routes across Central Asia to China, were amply accomplished by the subjugation of these centers of barbarism.

Long before the successful conclusion of this preliminary labor the moral and intellectual deterioration of the ruling house of China, inevitable in the life of every Asiatic dynasty, had begun to exhibit its melancholy influence in the political and material condition of the empire. While Great Britain was, for purposes of her own, making the incompetence of China apparent to all the world, Russia pursued her secular policy of advancing her frontiers and consolidating her possessions as occasions offered. This display of opportunism on an international scale involved the arts of diplomacy rather than those of war. Territory in large or small quantities has been in the picturesque Japanese phrase, "moth-eaten" out of the Chinese domain during the past forty years by processes as varied as they are ingenious—and with this especial advantage to the aggressor, that while it is impossible to carry on continually military campaigns the business of land-grabbing may be renewed with each new sunrise. The favorite device to secure her ends hitherto has been a demand at a moment of national embarrassment for some district so remote as to seem comparatively unimportant to the ignorant and listless palace clique at Peking. Such a *coup* was effected in 1858, when, taking advantage of the defeat inflicted upon China by the Allies, Russia retrieved the check received in 1689, and, without striking a blow, obtained the Amur as the boundary between the two empires and rights to navigate and settle on the river. As punishment for China's refusal to carry out this agreement next year—an act of bad faith which she coupled with her fatuous efforts to prevent the passage of the Taku forts by the British—she was compelled to surrender the whole coast region lying east of the Usuri between the mouth of the Amur and the boundary of Korea, an area covering eleven degrees of latitude and containing about 170,000 square miles. If to this be added the previous acquisition of the territory north of the Amur, perhaps 100,000 square miles in extent, the net gain to Russia of this operation is found to embrace a country considerably larger than the State of Texas. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this double treaty to the accomplishment of Russian policy. Its significance to their fortunes in Eastern Asia was rather greater than that

of securing Oregon to ours in Western America. Thereby they gained not only a magnificent waterway leading 1200 miles inland from the sea, but a long stretch of coast at the southern extremity of which could be placed a port and arsenal that in strength as well as in name might typify Russia's *Vladivostok* or "Dominion of the East."

Yet this performance hardly attracted the passing notice of European publicists. Beyond a surly growl the British lion made no comment, though he could lash himself into very genuine anger when the wholesome business of clearing the robbers out of Turkestan was proceeding. The presence of a powerful neighbor beyond the Pamirs and Hindu Kush—the inevitable boundaries of India—seemed distressing; the possession by that same neighbor of the open road to Northern China seemed insignificant. But, "on the Amur and Usuri the boundary line does not bear the stamp of permanency," wrote an intelligent English traveler at the time. "Russia holding one bank only of these rivers, whilst China holds the other, may at any chosen moment furnish a government desirous of encroaching upon its neighbor with fertile causes of dispute, and when the time comes when the huge Chinese empire tumbles to pieces, the whole of Manchuria, with Liaotung must become the prey of Russia."* England was not without its prophet, though the prophet, as usual, was without honor in his own country.

Another attempt on the part of Russia to absorb a distant frontier of China while the central government was powerless to interfere, had a different ending, and is also interesting as an illustration of Russia's willingness to withdraw rather than fight when the time seems inopportune or premature. A rebellion which broke out in the province of Ili, in the far west of the empire, was successful in destroying Chinese authority there and establishing in its place an old-fashioned type of Asiatic anarchy. Danger to the legitimate interests of Russia, and the apprehension that Yakub Beg, the successful rebel and able administrator of Kashgar, would seize this region also, induced the Russian government in 1871 to occupy Kulja, the capital and fortress of the province. The easy promise was made to the Chinese that the territory would be returned when they had re-established their authority beyond the desert, a promise which the Russians frankly confessed in private they never expected to make good. When at the end of ten years, however, the Chinese really renewed their hold on the region, Russia good-naturedly resigned a land-grab greater in size though of less value than that of

* E. G. Ravenstein, The Russians on the Amur, p. 154.

1861. Her honor was satisfied by an indemnity and a small slice of territory; but it was not difficult to understand that her best interests were served by waiting until the fruit was ripe before the plucking.

The policy of securing accessions by interference has been most clearly exhibited in the events of the past few years. China's difficulties have ever been Russia's opportunity, and after so serious a catastrophe as the war with Japan it was abundantly evident that no chances were to be missed in this crisis of her fortunes. The experience of thirty years in Northeastern Asia had amply proved the value of Primorskaya and Amur; the practicability of an overland rail route from the Baltic to the Pacific had been demonstrated and the road well begun; a naval base at Vladivostok had been established. But the rise of Japan as a modern military power and her ability to close the Sea of Japan in case of hostilities practically neutralized the importance of this portion of the Pacific coast. The fact that its harbors were ice-bound during six weeks of the winter was an additional motive to urge the Russians southward, but the importance of this factor may easily be exaggerated. Ice impedes commercial rather than military operations on the sea. Vladivostok being essentially a strategic base, not a port for traffic, could always be kept open for the entrance of ironclads in case of pressing necessity; nor do its masters greatly object to climatic conditions which are more likely to harass the offensive than the defensive in a campaign in those waters.

Japan's triumph as formulated in the treaty of Shimonoseki was therefore doubly objectionable to Russia; it not only increased the power of a prospective rival who could blockade Vladivostok, but by ceding Liautung promentory it placed him on both sides of Korea and within striking distance of every harbor on the seaboard of Northern China. If the Czar had any hope of withdrawing his Pacific stronghold beyond the clutches both of an Arctic winter and an eager rival he was hereby checkmated in a single move. His success in this predicament shows extraordinary accuracy in calculating the forces arrayed against him and sufficiently establishes his position as arbiter of the affairs of Eastern Asia. A threat of war at this juncture would have been, if not impracticable, at least highly impolitic; for Japan would not improbably have accepted a conflict, and with her forces already on the field and confident of the sympathy and support of Great Britain she could hardly have been defeated without an exhausting struggle. Until her trans-Siberian railroad is completed and the provinces beyond Baikal become in some degree self-supporting, Russia is no condition to meet a

first-class power on the Pacific. There remained, however, the resources of diplomacy. An appeal to the selfishness and land-hunger of the European powers brought France and Germany to her side. A promise to allot them remunerative shares in the division of China satisfied them of the danger to humanity and the cause of civilization in allowing Japan to retain Liautung. So the island empire withdrew before this imposing *force majeur,* and since the ratification of that compact Germany has possessed herself of Kiao chau with the usufruct of Shantung province as a Hinterland, while France has obtained concessions scarcely less profitabe in the rich province of Yunnan.

The imminent danger from Japan being removed, it was now necessary for Russia to reap the rewards not alone of her diplomatic success, but of many years of preparation and delay beyond the Amur. It seems probable—but upon such matters the historian can only speculate for the present—that down to the year 1895 Russia's objective was Korea; that her policy had been directed toward securing from China her suzerain rights over that nominal dependency; and that here she proposed to locate fortifications and garrisons connected by rail with her Siberian system, which would render her irresistible in the East. China's utter prostration after defeat made it possible to amend this programme and establish Port Arthur as a strategic base whence could be controlled not only the sea route to Peking, but the whole Yellow Sea. The cession of this highly important place, already equipped with shops, docks and fortifications, was made by the abject mandarins, nominally as a lease, embracing exclusive rights over Liautung promentory, in 1895. It was a brilliant and striking diplomatic success, possibly the most dramatic *coup* ever effected in modern Asiatic politics. But the real crisis of this long adventure, the culmination of which renders the Port Arthur triumph a mere corollary, had ere this been quietly and completely attained. For Russia has never willingly departed from her policy of continuous expansion over territories contiguous to her own, and the motives that impelled her to transfer Alaska to the United States would not admit her establishment in an isolated peninsula on the Korean Bay.

In the abduction of Manchuria from Chinese control Russia applied for her own purposes some features of that Hinterland doctrine which has recently been developed by Europe and Africa. On the principle that the region back of her coast province as far as the Desert of Gobi was a Hinterland, she could claim the land stretching from the Amur to the Yellow Sea and thereby complete the project long entertained of advancing her frontier to march with

that to China proper. Such a step would make her not only the master of a rich and habitable country, but would render her practically indifferent to the control of Korea, since her possessions would now stretch northward of that peninsula in an unbroken line to the sea. If within the past year she has resigned to Japan her pretentions to manage the affairs of that little kingdom her abstention need not be attributed to compunction or confession of error; it is enough that she has found something better suited to her grand aims. A delicate feature in taking over Manchuria, however, lay in the fact that this territory, so far from being a mere appendage of the empire, was peculiarly dear to the ruling dynasty as being the ancient home of the clan, and thereby for sentimental reasons highly cherished by the Emperor's kin. To obviate the dangers involved in the application of military pressure upon the court at Peking it was asked to guarantee Russia the exclusive rights to build a system of railroads across Manchuria connecting her Siberian line with Vladivostok and Liautung promentory; to operate and guard this system with Russian servants and troops—the latter to be garrisoned in each station along the route;—to exploit the mines and forests of the territory; and to settle her colonists there so long as she remained care-taker on the premises. The proviso that China may assume control of these roads and mines at the end of eighty years upon payment of an indemnity over and above their alleged value at that time is, under the circumstances, hardly worth consideration as a serious document.

All that concerns the present inquiry is the actual, not the theoretical situation of Russia as affected by this move. It places her in military and fiscal control of the Tung-san-shêng or "three eastern provinces," to which collectively the name Manchuria has been applied by foreigners. The area of this region is roughly estimated at about 275,000 square miles, about as much again as Russia secured by the cessions of 1858-61. Its value, however, is considerably greater, not only because of its command of the metropolitan province of Chihli, but also on account of a superior sub-Arctic climate, great fertility, extensive forests, and a population, nineteen-twentieths pure Chinese, reckoned at 25,000,000. The ancient Tartar bands who formerly roamed over the country have recently been absorbed in the flood of Chinese immigrants whom the Taiping rebellion, two wide-spread famines and the great Yellow River inundation have driven from Northern China to find homes in this remote but not uncongenial solitude. A population made up of such elements as thrive best in frontier settlements has precisely the rough vigor and adaptability likely to suit the purposes of Rus-

sian policy. Colonists like these may be expected to take as kindly to Western methods and inventions as do the Chinese in the Straits Settlements, America, and elsewhere, nor will Russia with such a labor supply be thwarted and delayed in the execution of her projects as has been the case in unpopulous Siberia. The railway system, abandoning the old caravan route across the Mongolian steppe between Kialhta and Kalgan, is intended to leave the main Siberian line considerably east of Lake Baikal at Nerchinsk or Stretinsk, and by keeping well within the wooded and watered districts of Tsitsihar and Kirin supply a commercial artery as well as a strategic road to this promising land. Here, then, are the indispensable requisites to permanent control in Northeastern Asia already well within Russian hands: fortified arsenals on the Pacific and Yellow Sea coasts, through rail connections with the capital and seat of empire, a littoral region sufficiently rich and large to support an army of defense without the necessity of transporting troops across a continent, and finally the natural products, such as coal and iron, and provisions, that may be counted on to supply raw material for the ships and guns of a navy as well as an army.

With nations as with individuals rapid and severe exertion, no matter how gratifying its result, must be followed by rest. Though the victor in the games bear away the prize, he may not safely attempt another encounter until he is allowed a little space for recuperation. Russia at present has need of time for assimilating her newly-won territory to the system already ordered for the whole of Siberia, and a conviction of this need palpably inspires her policy in the railway negotiations still proceeding. The Japanese attack upon China which precipitated the crisis in Eastern Asia found Russia—as was perhaps intended—quite unprepared to participate. Because the trans-Siberian railroad was only half completed she was powerless to mass troops and stores in the East in quantities sufficient to dictate to such a sturdy opponent as Japan. That she succeeded in accomplishing so much under this disadvantage was, as has been seen, the result rather of brilliant and energetic diplomacy based upon intimate knowledge of the various factors and forces involved than of physical strength. Now that the stake has been risked and won it is doubly necessary for her to palliate for the present the irritation of her rivals and secure the future by completing the requisite railways. Orders to hasten operations on the main line across the continent have been already carried out with such effect that the all-rail connection with Vladivostok which was at first rather hoped for than expected by the year 1904 is now confidently promised in 1902. In Manchuria, however, where

nothing but preliminary surveys have yet been begun, at least five or six years must be required to join Port Arthur with the great network that is to support and include it as an integral part. Until this junction is effected and some organization introduced into the region her practical hold upon these new possessions is from a military point of view hazardous in the extreme; that it is anything at all is due not only to the decrepitude of China, but also to the jealousies and cupidity of Europeans whom she has shrewdly disturbed and divided to secure her particular end.

Russia's evident intention of treating Manchuria as a portion of her own territories has been exhibited from the outset by the conduct of her officers and agents wherever they go, by the settlement of Cossacks at numerous posts, and by the exclusion of other foreigners from Port Arthur and Talienwan, despite previous declarations of a contrary intention, as soon as her garrisons were fairly ensconsed there. The inclusion of Niuchwang on the Liau River in this comprehensive application of the old-fashioned doctrine of allowing a victor the spoils revealed, however, an *impasse* which has threatened the gravest consequences. For Niuchwang (also spelt New chwang) has long been one of the so-called treaty-ports of China, to which ports her foreign commerce is restricted and at which, of course, all foreigners enjoy equal privileges. To eliminate one of these from the number of Chinese trading-places, as the result not of conquest, but of private compact devoting it to the exclusive benefit of a single foreign power, was an infraction, therefore, of the rights of all the others, and the first practical exhibition of the meaning of the much-mooted "partition of China." It was fortunate, perhaps, that this demonstration instantly convinced the nation whose successive diplomatic rebuffs during two years had been borne with curious passiveness. Great Britain, a little callous of late to her loss of prestige in Eastern Asia, had no disposition to endure patiently an assault upon her pocket-book. England and the United States, as it happens, enjoy seven-eighths of the foreign-borne trade to this port, which is the entrepot supplying the whole of Manchuria with whatever it gets from abroad. Its tariff revenues are the main reliance of the administrators of the province, which under Chinese control has been barely self-supporting. When, consequently, the Russians included the customs and commerce of this place in their occupation of Manchuria the British awoke with a start to a sense of the importance of the issue. For the first time in her long series of aggressions in Eastern Asia, Russia had emerged beyond the merely potential into the practical subtraction of territory and markets from the legitimate and vested enjoyment of

others. It was substantially an act of war committed during a time of peace. Yet from the standpoint of the economical administrator the need of Russia was pressing. There are reasons to doubt that Manchuria can be made profitable until her mines and forests are reached by modern machines and worked by Western processes, all of which will require time to establish.

The blunt pretention that the authority of the Czar was paramount to that of the Emperor Kwangsü in one of the open Chinese ports was something that the Asiatic office at St. Petersburg was hardly as yet in position to make. Its answer, however, to the timely protest of Great Britain was a deflection of the course of the Manchurian railway from Kirin to Port Arthur and Talienwan beyond reach of Niuchwang, thus denying that city the benefits of railway communication and creating Talienwan the future entrepot of the province. Unable to prevent this, the British now undertook through the agency of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank to complete for China some two hundred and sixty miles of railroad between Shanhaikwan, the present terminus of the Northern line from Peking, and Niuchwang, thereby joining the natural emporium of these northern regions with the projected rail system of China. But here arose another deadlock and source of irritation acute enough a few months ago to actually menace war. To secure their loan of $11,500,000 capital indispensable for the work proposed, the bankers as is usual demanded a lien on the road; but Russia, determined that no foreigner shall be allowed any hand in or hold upon Manchuria, compelled the Peking government to withdraw from the contract thus concluded. The situation between these two great powers during the closing months of last year was more serious than at any time since the Pendjeh incident in 1885; nor is it improbable, as already hinted in some journals, that the sudden arming and array of the British navy last October was inspired not by the luckless temerity of the Frenchman Marchand at Fashoda, but by this bullying command of Russia to the Tsung-li yamen. The crisis, however, passed. There must have been a very madness of vexation on the part of thousands of officers whose ambition is eating away their hearts in the dreariness of barrack life throughout the Russian empire, whose cry is ever "How long, O Lord! how long!" But the risk of all she has won for half a century was much too great to be faced by the ruler of that empire. Probably nothing has, to those who understand the Russian soldier, so abundantly proved the stolid determination of his supreme officers to wait until the railway system is complete, as their practical surrender to British firmness this winter at Peking.

The railway from the seaward end of the Great Wall to Niuchwang is therefore to be constructed within the sacred precincts of Russian control by British money and engineers, but as a concession to Russian susceptibilities the five per cent. loan is secured by a lien on the Imperial railroad in general, not on that part of it running north of Shanhaikwan. The port on the Liau will be saved from its threatened commercial ruin by the continued visitation of foreign importers and a chance to share in the rapid transit system of modern China. Is there any significance in the fact, or was it mere fortuitous coincidence, that the Czar's rescript proposing a general disarmament of European nations was issued at about the time that Russia had convinced herself of her inability to take up a gague of battle when flung at her in the Far East?

As an offset to the advantage secured by Great Britain in enforcing her contract rights upon soil claimed for Russia, the latter power has in another region scored a success against her adversary-in-chief of somewhat the same sort. The southern end of the little stretch of railways already running in Chihli province terminates at present at Paotingfu, from which point it is designed to continue the road across the fertile and populous Yellow River valley to Hankow, a distance of some 650 miles. The "Lu-Han," a name derived by combining the initial syllables of its termini Lu-ku chiao, the Peking station, and Hankow on the Yangtsz', is a road which has already served to illustrate the precarious nature of such undertakings in decadent China. Its desirability as a trunk line connecting the northern and southern groups of provinces was long ago recognized and its construction ordered by Imperial edict. But the proviso that it should be built with Chinese capital, of Chinese material and by Chinese workmen rendered its realization actually impossible. No Chinaman would trust the official guarantee. After the disastrous war with Japan a livelier sense of its necessity moved the government to promise entire immunity from official interference if the "rich merchants" of the provinces would finance the affair and hire engineers wherever they could. Still the native capitalists distrusted their own mandarins, and the project hung fire. When Shêng was appointed Director General of Railways two years ago he negotiated with a number of foreign syndicates—sometimes, it is said, with all of the applicants at once—in hopes that in the eagerness of their competition China might secure her great improvement at less than cost. But here again the best laid schemes failed because of the fatal doubt in the integrity of mere promises and paper pledges from the Chinese authorities. What reliance upon such endorsement would mean to the investor was rather

amusingly illustrated when it was suggested that the road might be built piecemeal out of the profits accruing from the road in operation between Tientsin and Shanhaikwan, the success of which was already considerable. The moment this plan was explained to the officials whose pockets had received a regular and handsome percentage of these dividends the profits shrank into nothingness and the government was once more compelled to rely upon foreign assistance. This came finally in the shape of the Russo-Chinese Bank, an arm of the Russian government created for the purpose of building the Manchurian railways, which on security of the road itself has already built and is now running the line from Peking to Paotingfu. Beyond this point it is backing the Belgian syndicate and thereby securing the same substantial privileges under a mask, so that the prospect is not uncertain of a trunk line between Peking and the Yangtsz' managed and practically owned in perpetuity by the Russian Empire.

It would be impossible within the limits of a sketch which is concerned only with the attitude of Russia toward China to describe the plans and prospects of other European nations in this competition for railroads. Such a conquest by economic instruments instead of by armed men of a magnificent and productive territory hitherto untouched by the appliances of modern industrial mechanism is of itself unique and interesting. Were the competition confined to the Western European nations the results of their rivalries might be contemplated with composure on the part of China, who would in the end reap the benefits of this long delayed transformation of her economic life. The situation assumes a very serious aspect, however, when it is remembered that the plans of Russia do not involve primarily the exploitation and improvement of a backward country. If the lesson of her past career in Asia teaches us anything it shows an advance undertaken from the outset for purposes of conquest and permanent control. To her the descent from the Mongolian steppe into populous China means the commencement of the last great act in the long drama of her absorption of Asia, the acquisition of the richest and most important region of its size, perhaps, in the inhabited globe. Once fairly within her grasp, deeply involved in financial obligations to the foreigner, its main arteries of traffic built and run by Muscovite officials, its stations in possession of Cossack guards, its mines producing coal and metals for Russian armaments, its troops drilled by and obedient to Russian officers, this ancient empire will under its imbecile rulers surely succumb to the doom so long withheld. When Russia is fully possessed of the enormous resources and the plentiful popula-

tion of China she has only to set her mighty army of farmers and artizans and miners as well as of fighting men in order to dictate her will to the world. With this result achieved Constantinople, the object of her earlier ambition, will fall of itself into her lap; and when the Ottoman has returned at last into the obscurity from whence he emerged in the thirteenth century, decrepit Iran may follow in his footsteps and the entire continent of Asia north of the Himalayas become a breeding-place for Russian soldiers, the exclusive dominion of the greatest monopoly ever seen. And when finally the genius arises who can move this mighty mass by the old magic of victory to follow him as once they followed Jenghiz Khan or Tamerlane, what human strength can resist him?

This, perhaps, is the Yellow Peril, of which we hear—a little scoffingly indeed, because the yellow man at present is apparently the most impotent and insignificant factor in the political problem. But the yellow man with his indomitable industry and his magnificent domain is still there, only awaiting leadership. And the Slav is ready, with his long experience among Asiatics, his adaptability to their methods and ideals, his definite desire for empire and autocratic rule, to lead as fast and as far as he will follow. There is no pretense here of the education and development of a backward civilization by more progressive Europe; no cant of Christianity preached to unregenerate heathen nor the supplanting of Oriental materialism by a higher spiritual message. It is the old East incarnate, arrayed in the panoply of modern science and invention, instructed and once more unified, as in the days of ancient Persia, under Aryan leadership, ready for a renewal of the eternal struggle with the liberty and enlightenment of the West.

F. W. WILLIAMS.